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SUBJECT: Media Report January 8

Leading Story

[¶1.](#) The annual inflation rate in Chile dropped to -1.4% in 2009, the lowest in 74 years.

Chile-U.S.-Latin America

[¶2.](#) Under absolute confidentiality, Foreign Minister Mariano Fernandez traveled to Venezuela last night on a mission with a specific goal: to promote OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza's reelection. His subsequent destination will be Nicaragua. Minister Fernandez' tour coincides with Venezuela and Nicaragua's -in addition to the United States'- dismissal to move ahead the elections scheduled for May. Minister Fernandez will return to Chile during the weekend, in time for the upcoming visit to Chile of Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere Arturo Valenzuela. This is his first trip to the country since coming into office on November 10. His presence will also give Minister Fernandez an opportunity to seek U.S. endorsement for Insulza. Since last June, Insulza's relationship with the American government hasn't been at its best. (Conservative, independent La Tercera 1/8)

U.S.-Chile

[¶3.](#) President Bachelet inaugurated Thursday a modern inspection site of fruits and vegetables destined for the U.S. market. The state-of-the-art facilities in the area of Teno, in central Chile, will increase the capability of the Chilean Agricultural and Animal Service (SAG) to conduct pre-departure inspections of produce exported to the United States. The front-page headline of the story is accompanied by a large photo of the President at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, flanked by U.S. Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulation Programs Edward Avalos, U.S. Ambassador Paul Simons, and other officials. (Regional daily La Prensa, 1/8)

[¶4.](#) President Bachelet, high-level U.S. representatives, and local exporter representatives inaugurated a modern inspection plant in Teno. (Regional daily El Centro, 1/8)

¶5. U.S. Ambassador Paul Simons visited the Binational Center in Curico (Region Seven) where he participated in a dialogue with students and teachers. Ambassador Simons noted the great progress achieved by Chile during the past years, and commented that President Bachelet's role has been key to strengthening the excellent bilateral relations that both countries enjoy. (La Prensa 1/8)

Frei Case

¶6. In a divided ruling, the Santiago Court of Appeals' Eighth Room released on bail the two physicians prosecuted for murder in the death of former President Eduardo Frei Montalva. The court revoked a ruling which had denied granting them such privilege for considering them "a threat to society safety." (Conservative, newspaper-of-record, El Mercurio 1/8)

¶7. Interview with forensic expert and toxicologist Carmen Cerda, co-author of the key report that revealed alleged presence of mustard gas and thallium in Frei's sample tissues. Asked about the tests conducted by the FBI, Dr. Cerda noted that Judge Alejandro Madrid asked the FBI to run DNA tests: "That was

the first controversial test requested to the FBI, who uncompromisingly answered 'No drugs' and added no further comments," Dr. Cerda said. When asked about how much importance she would give to such study, she commented: "None. In other judicial cases, Chile's Investigative Police tried to send forensic material to the FBI asking for their assistance in clarifying certain doubts, but they would invariably answer: 'It cannot be determined.' Therefore, I came to the conclusion that they chose not to become involved with any results when these were not initiated by them or they did not take samples themselves." To the question, "Word says that the FBI could not find chemical substances due to the aged tissue samples received," Dr. Cerda answered: "Chile's request to the FBI was one: To determine the DNA. As a matter of fact, it only muddled up the case rather than simplifying it."

Local

¶8. Adimark polling company revealed that President Bachelet had 81% approval in December, over 77% obtained the previous month, raising her popularity to record levels in Chile's history. (Government-owned, editorially independent La Nacion 1/8)

Terror

¶9. Editorial: "Terror Threat on Aviation: The Role of Intelligence is Key" "The announcement about stricter security measures for commercial flights and airports does not attack the core of the problem: the failure of the intelligence services whose mission is to prevent the attacks... Undoubtedly, international terrorism justifies intensifying precautions and vigilance... Nevertheless, it also seems clear that the latest announcements spring from fear and from the governments' need to show a proactive attitude, rather than from a deep and impassionate reflection about the best way to confront such danger... The most emblematic terrorist attacks in history -on the Twin Towers-were possible as a result of the massive failure of the agencies responsible for detecting and monitoring anything related to such threats... The lesson learned is that the silent, slow-paced, invisible to the public opinion, but effective and coordinated work of intelligence is what offers the best chance to deactivate terror conspiracies before they fulfill their goals. This is where major efforts should be focused on rather than on just toughening controls on airlines and airports." (La Tercera, 1/8)

¶10. Opinion piece by international pundit Raul Sohr, entitled "Terrorism and Air Safety Dilemmas" "Fourteen countries were punished for the U.S. intelligence services' failure... Scanners are slow and it will be difficult to have all passengers go through them. What will authorities do then? They will select those individuals more liable of carrying explosives. A word to the wise is sufficient: there will be a stricter application of ethnical selection... Al Qaeda and its associates operate under the logic of terrorist methods... Besides, they manage to gain the support of many Muslim passengers who may have never empathized with fundamentalists... Above all, the battle against Al Qaeda is political. That is how President Barack Obama understands it. And a sign of this is his order to close the prison in Guantanamo. From a political standpoint, there is a delicate balance between guaranteeing security and not alienating the people who are intended for protection. (La Nacion, 1/8)

SIMONS